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**The effects of global trends on the future of marketing
communications — an international perspective**

Thesis of PhD Dissertation

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1. THE OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The basic aim of the dissertation is to explore the future development of marketing communication in an international context. To succeed in this objective is not easy since marketers' job in the 21st century is perhaps one of the most difficult due to all the changes taking place in the global environment. To give advice to future marketers is however of utmost importance since marketing communication meets customers first. As Kotler, Armstrong, Sounders and Wong as early as 1996 state that "modern marketing calls for more than just developing a good product, pricing it attractively, and making it available to target customers. Companies must also communicate with their customers, and what they communicate should not be left to chance." (Kotler, Armstrong, Sounders, Wong, 1996, p.686)

Forecasting is not an exact science; still a comprehensive literature review and the results of a qualitative and quantitative research may produce a good picture about the expected directions marketing communication may go in the next decade. Furthermore, it is believed that a survey made in Croatia, Hungary, India, and in some advanced countries will give the forecast a special international perspective making it possible to analyze and compare the experts' opinions of the different regions. Based on this the objectives the dissertation can be formulated as follows:

- To form an understanding of the current practices, issues of marketing communication through the exploration of secondary sources.
- To understand the current megatrends companies face, which also affect their practice of marketing and marketing communication.
- To better understand how practitioners, college and university students as well as people working in the field of marketing communication and the advertising industry feel about the future of this business in relation to these global trends.
- To identify and understand the differences of the regional assessments concerning the future advancement of marketing communication.

The structure of the dissertation follows the usual logics of a PhD thesis. First, based on comprehensive international literature review, it elaborates the theory and practice of the given topic. Since the basic goal of the work is the exploration of how the global megatrends will affect the future of marketing communication the theoretical foundation has also two parts:

- The first part elaborates the theory and practice of marketing communication including its historical periodization since its emergence until nowadays.
- The second part tries to identify those global megatrends, which will determine the business environment and through this will influence the future of marketing communication.

The next part of the dissertation contains the framing of assumptions (hypotheses). Assumption and hypothesis are synonyms; still in this study assumption is used since it deals with the future, so verification or rejection of the assumptions does not mean the proper realization of the event observed, but it proves only its agreements with the opinions of the experts. According to Besenyei this type of investigation is a “gnoseologic approach of understanding the reality” since the verification of its validity can be made only ex-post, i.e. when time goes and future becomes present (Besenyei, 2011: 1042).

The following main part of the work describes the methodology used. Next, the processing of the information and the findings of the research are discussed. The dissertation ends with verification of the assumptions and the presentation of the new scientific results.

2. SHORT SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE LITERATURE RESEARCH

2.1. The development of marketing communication

The dissertation deals in details with the definition of marketing communication, with its place and role in marketing, with strategies and means used, and with its successful and less successful practice. The development of marketing communication – being part of the marketing mix – it obviously

depends on the advancement of marketing as a whole and on the marketing concept dominating the given market. As every part of a discipline, marketing communication has also a kind of self-movement. It means that its development can separately be investigated. Based on the comprehensive literature review table 1. presents the historical periodization of marketing communication and the characteristics of each period.

Table 1. The evolutionary stages of marketing communication (Own research)

Era/ characteristics	Mass communication	Diversified communication	Integrated MC	Digital communication CRM
Time period	1950-1960	1970-1980	1990-2000	21st century
Scope	USA	USA and advanced countries (Europe)	+ transition countries and emerging countries	+ rapidly growing markets (BRICS)
Competition	weak	stronger	very strong and getting international	global
Demand	big and not sophisticated	selected	changing and fragmented	global
Trade Channels	fragmented	stronger	concentrated and very strong	global and very strong
Customers	buy everything	diversified and selective	value conscious	compare values and price
Communication	mass communication	use of many promotional means	need for integrating communication means	two-way communication
Main communication means	TV, Radio, Press	+ SP, and BTL means	everything in a coordinated form	focus on online, social media
Main turning point for MC	mass communication	positioning in advertising	Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)	RMC and Personal communication
Technological evolution	Color TVs, media diversification	Computers, VCRs, cable TV	The Internet, E-commerce	New media, Mobile communications

2.2. Global megatrends influencing the future of business and marketing environment

Megatrends, as against trends and fads, develop during decades and they affect the environment strongly and for long time. According to Stefan Hajkovicz (2015) “megatrends are gradual yet powerful trajectories of change that have the potential to throw companies, individuals and societies into freefall”.

In the literature review, forecasts about the future of the world economy made by famous international research institutions or experts were studied. (Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies, National Intelligence Council, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, The Hay Group, The McKinsey&Company, The Ernst and Young Comp., etc.). This investigation proved that the megatrends identified and published earlier (Rekettye, and Rekettye Jr., 2013) are there and probability that they will influence the business environment in future is very high. These are the followings:

- Global climate change (global warming, multiplication of extreme weather events).
- Radical power-shift in the world economy (economic power moves from West to East and South)
- Demographic changes (aging in the West, overpopulation and rapid urbanization in East).
- The after-effects of the global financial and economic recession (radical changes in the consumer behavior).
- Proliferation of brands and communication tools.
- The exponential acceleration of technology (especially in the field of ICT).

3. THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCH (HYPOTHESES)

Based on the results of the literature review and the in-depth interviews the following assumptions were formulated (Table 2.).

Table 2. The assumptions of the research (Own illustration)

Assumptions concerning the changes in marketing communication in the next decade	
Assumption 1.	Marketing communication will change radically all over the world.
Assumption 2.	Changes in marketing communication will be greater on the emerging market than on the Western markets with greater expenditures and with new methods and contents.
Assumption 3.	The endeavour for both globalization and localization will characterize marketing communication with more emphasis on localization in the emerging world.
Assumption 4.	The global megatrends will undoubtedly affect the business and marketing environment and thus reshape the practices of marketing communications.
Assumption 5.	Each global trend will have a different effect on the practice of marketing communication.
Assumption 6.	Mass communications' role will decrease.
Assumption 7.	The rapid growth of digital technology will greatly change the choice of tools companies use for communicating with their customers.
Assumption 8.	Tools that favour two-way communication will be gaining more popularity in marketing communication.
Assumption 9.	The content of marketing communication is going to favour messages that are more rational.

4. THE MODELL AND METHODOLOGY OF THE PRIMARY RESEARCH

The research model was constructed to serve the basic objectives of the dissertation listed at the beginning of the thesis (Figure 1.).



Figure 1. The research model
Own illustration

To succeed in the objectives in-depth interviews with communication experts and an on-line questionnaire survey based on the results of the in-depth interviews proved to be appropriate. In the convenience sample based on the snowball methods those experts were asked, who were supposed to have a good understanding both of the economic developments of their own country and the world economy, as well. The other aim was to include, beside Hungary, one country from the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, one country similar to Hungary and one from the advanced world.

To choose the sample contacts were established with professional associations in Croatia, Finland, Hungary and India. In Croatia Cromar (The Croatian Marketing Association), in Finland the educators of a Business School, in Hungary EMOK (The Association of marketing Educators) and in India the EMG (The Association of MBA Educators) were contacted to distribute the questionnaire among their members and graduate students and business contacts.

The questionnaire was prepared in Hungarian and English and was tested by experts before being finalized. Altogether 315 filled answers were returned. The

Finnish sample proved to be small that is why through professional social media (Linkedin, etc.) it was augmented by experts opinions from other advanced countries. Table 3. shows the detailed composition of the sample.

Table 3. The detailed composition of the sample (%) (Own research)

		Advanced countries	Transition		Emerging	Countries
			Croatia	Hungary	India	Total
Occupation	Educators	37.2	48.2	39.7	83.3	52.2
	MBA students	2.0	14.3	18.1	3.9	11.0
	Businessmen	60.8	37.5	42.2	12.8	36.9
Age	Below 35	25.5	53.6	43.1	27.3	38.0
	36 - 55	56.9	37.5	35.3	54.5	44.3
	Above 55	17.6	8.9	21.6	18.2	17.7
Gender	Male	56.9	43.4	49.1	64.9	53.4
	Female	43.1	56.6	50.9	35.1	46.6
Marketing Affiliation	Yes	68.0	76.8	60.3	53.8	63.0
	No	32.0	23.2	39.7	46.2	37.0
Total Distribution		16.9	18.6	38.5	25.9	100.0

The sample is balanced in terms of occupation, age, gender, and marketing affiliation; it has however significant differences according to the countries. This fact does not mean any problems in a research forecast, which is referring mainly to the given country and which realization has a hypothetical probability.

5. THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

5.1. Opinions about the general issues of the future of marketing communication

The first aim of the questionnaire survey was to learn what respondents think about the intensity of changes in terms of content and means used in marketing communication in the next decade. Respondents had the possibility to select among four statements:

- radical changes,
- gradual changes,
- minimal changes, and
- no change at all.

From the 315 respondent 309 answered this question and could be processed by the SPSS software. Since the frequency of the option 'no change at all' was very low 'minimal changes' and no changes at all' could be added up giving the possibility to use only three options. The results are shown in Figure 2.

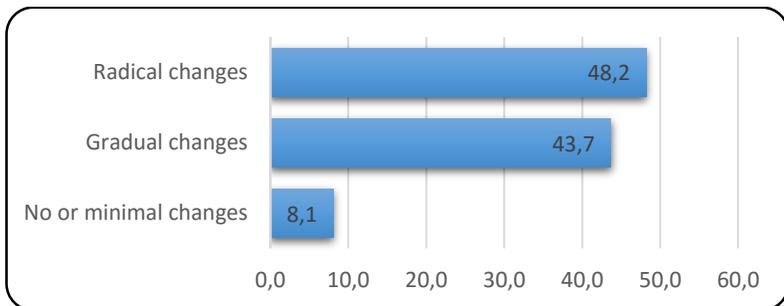


Figure 2. The distribution of the responses (%) (Own research)

The distribution of the answers according to the variables (age, occupation, and marketing affiliation) according to the Pearson Chi-Square Test showed no significant differences. There was however one variable which showed

significant differences. This was the distribution of the responses according to countries. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of responses about the changes of MC according countries (%) (Own research)

Statements	Advanced countries	Croatia	Hungary	India
No or minimal changes	5.9	3.6	15.8	2.6
Gradual changes	43.1	60.0	42.1	31.6
Radical changes	51.0	36.4	42.1	65.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

It is worthwhile to mention that the almost two thirds of the Indian respondents expect radical changes in the marketing communication in the coming decade. This attitude correlates very much with the good performance of the Indian economy in these years, and most probably, they believe that this good performance will continue in the next decade. It is also interesting to see that the Hungarian respondent were rather moderate in their expectations. Almost one sixth of the Hungarian respondent believe that there will be no or minimal changes in the communication.

The most important findings of the survey concerning the general issues regarding marketing communications in which all the respondents from the different countries agreed are the following:

- Changes in marketing communications in the next decade will be radical.
- Small and medium sized companies will not be able to produce as effective marketing communications as the larger ones.
- Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is becoming more important.
- Online media expenditures will increase radically compared with traditional media expenditures.

In certain issues there were significant differences between the opinions of Indians and the respondents of other countries:

- Increase of total expenditure of MC
- Decrease of expenditure on mass media
- Increase of the share of governmental and non-profit organizations in the MC expenditures.

Summarizing it can be stated that the Indian experts represented a more radical and optimistic standpoint compared with the other countries. This originates most probably from their beliefs that their economy is on a good track, which will continue in the next decade.

5.2 The issue of globalization or localization

The scope of the research is international. In international context, the main question of marketing is whether to globalize or localize. Marketing communication is perhaps the most sensitive marketing mean in this issue since it is belonging to the downstream part of the supply chain (Hollensen, 2011; Rekettye et al., 2015). The sensitivity of the issue comes from the fact that these customers live in another environment: they speak other languages, they may have other religions, they may have quite different sociocultural attitudes, etc. Marketing communication meets the customers first; and it is of utmost importance that the customers should be able to decode the messages, to understand the information. To send good and understandable messages intercultural dialogue is needed. In addition, intercultural dialogue is dependent largely on intercultural competencies. Defined as the 'complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with those who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself' (Fantini, 2007), these abilities are essentially communicative in nature, but they also involve reconfiguring our perspectives and understandings of the world (Unesco, 2009).

Still the question is always there for business and non-business entities: to standardize the communication mix to get cost advantages or to adapt to the

local conditions. The respondents from the four distinct areas were asked about the globalization contra localization issue with a five point Likert scale. The question was coined in this form “Due to cultural differences marketing communication will mostly stay localized”. Adding up the “partially agree” and the “completely agree” categories under the term Agree and setting them against the sum of “Strongly disagree, partially disagree and the neutral” categories, titled Not agree, the following result were observed (Figure 3.).

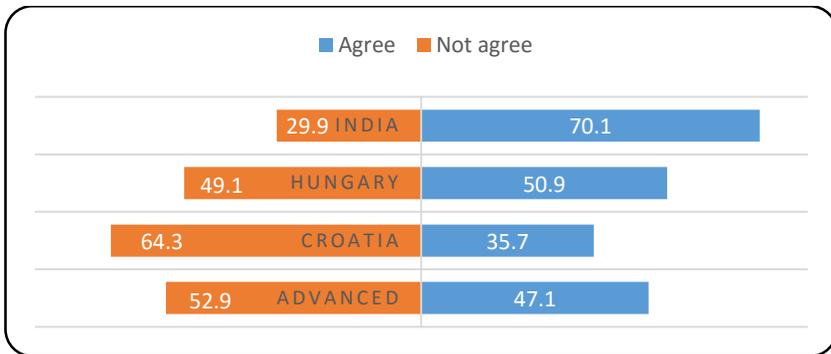


Figure 3. The differences on the agreements with localization (%)
Own research

While the balance between “Agree” and “Not agree” is in the advanced countries and Hungary is around 50-50%, the Croats vote for globalization, and the Indians for localization. Their attitude is quite understandable: the growing Indian consumer market is rather fragmented. The cultural diversity of the Indian people, differences of languages, differences in tastes, and habits would make it very difficult for companies to work with a globalized scheme of marketing communication (Kumar, 2009; Kurl, 2015).

5.3. The effects of global megatrends on the business and marketing environment

In the following part factor *analysis* was used to see whether the statements of the questionnaire were well-constructed and to reduce the number of factors influencing the business environment. Two sessions were made. In first one, we

included the statement about the rapid growth in digital technology. The session results proved that this was an independent component; it could not be grouped to any other factors. The next run was made without this factor.

The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.857 in this case showing that the variables were very good (Sajtos, Mitev, 2007, 258) for making factor analysis. For deciding about the number of artificial components the sc. Kaiser Criteria was used; i.e. their eigenvalues should be higher than 1.

According to researchers in social sciences, the cumulative explained value around 50-60% is acceptable. In this case it was 59.194%

The values of the factor analyses is presented in table 5.

Table 5. The Rotated Component Matrix (Own research)

Variables/Components	1	2	3	4	5
The role of new product development increases	0.801				
Changes in product portfolios	0.775				
The content and tools of marketing communication changes	0.684				
Sustainable development will be the focus in new product development		0.821			
Corporate social responsibility will gain more ground		0.797			
The role of social marketing will grow		0.719			
Change in consumer behavior			0.776		
Growth of price sensitivity			0.704		
Growth of discount retailers, stores			0.596		
The emergence of new market segments means more cultural sensitivity from global brands			0.561		
Consumers find it harder to make decisions				0.767	
Local brands have a more difficult position				0.763	
Image maybe become the focus of communication				0.536	
Marketing communication receives more attention				0.510	
The supply of developing countries is weakening brands of developed countries					0.760
The emergence of new market segments means more cultural sensitivity from global brands					0.616

Note: "Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization."

The components listed in the table above were paired with the megatrends identified in the first half of the study, thus the components can be named as follows:

1. Demography
2. Climate
3. Crisis
4. Proliferation
5. Power shift

Technology was handled as a separate factor. According to the properties of the analysis, each factor’s mean is 1 and the standard deviation is 0. To be able to compare the grade of agreements of the respondent the factor values were transformed by the expression $(x-x_{min})/(x_{max}-x_{min})$ into variables with a value between 0 and 1.

The mean values after transformation were the following:

1. Demography = 0.7335
2. Climate = 0.7550
3. Crisis = 0.7565
4. Proliferation = 0.7111
5. Power shift = 0.6992.

The ranking of these components according to countries are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Ranking of megatrends by countries (Own research)

Megatrends	Ranking from 1 to 5.		
	Croatia	Hungary	India
Climate	2	2	2
Crisis	1	1	5
Power Shift	5	5	4
Demography	3	4	1
Proliferation	4	3	3

Note: 1: most important, 5 least important

The striking difference is in the row of “crisis”. It shows that in both Croatia and Hungary the business environment still suffers from the after effects of the global recession. Both agree with the statement that the consumer behavior has radically changed and the consumers became very much price sensitive (the

highest – 93% agreement was in this issue). The fact that Indians’ responses put this issue at the last place shows that they did not and do not suffer so much from the after effects of the recession. Their economy is booming and they expect growing marketing activity as well.

There is also a huge difference in the “demography” issue. Both Hungary and Croatia is experiencing a rapid ageing of the population, which will later influence the marketing and marketing communication activity. In Hungary, the old age dependency ratio ($65+/(15-64)$) in 2014 was already 26% compared to India’s figure of 8%. In India, the demographic issues have different aspects: overpopulation as a negative effect and rapid urbanization as a positive effect on the business environment.

It is also interesting that power shift that is the expectation of the world economists that the wealth is moving from West to East was considered not so important from the part of the Croatian and Hungarian respondents.

5.4. The effects of the changed business and marketing environment on marketing communication

In the following part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to mark what aspect of marketing communication the discussed global trends affect. The questions were multiple-choice type with the possibility to check more than one answer. The majority of the respondents believed that the changed business and marketing environment would change first the content and second the tools of marketing communication. Besides this changing environment would require higher expenditure on marketing communication (Figure 4).

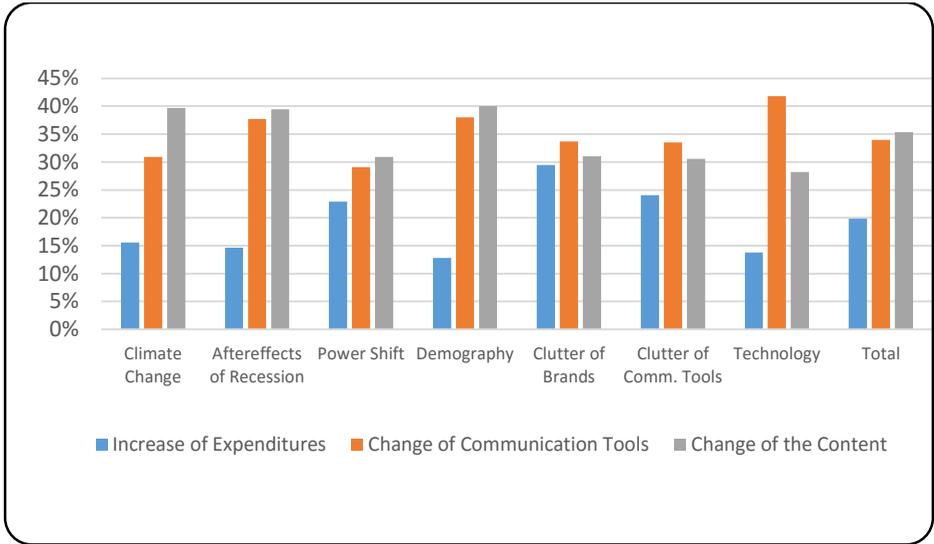


Figure 4. Illustration of the relation among the trends and their possible effects
(Own research)

Figure 4. shows that according to the expectations of the respondents the demographic issues, the climate change, and the altered customer behaviour will have the highest effect on the *content* of marketing communication, while the development of the digital technology, the changing consumer behaviour, and the demography will affect the *arsenal of tools* of marketing communication. The proliferation of brands and communication tools will increase first the *money spent on marketing communication*.

It means that if companies want to increase the performance of their marketing communication they have to concentrate on three issues in the future:

- to perform a well prepared content marketing,
- to select and use the new communication tools in a synergic way to get the content to the customers and prospects of the selected market,
- selectively invest money in the new communication tools and measure their effectiveness regularly.

To meet these requirements is a big challenge, sometimes called “digital challenge” for the companies. They will be compelled to follow the changed customer journey, i.e., the journey customers go through from awareness or

orientation on a product to purchasing and even becoming loyal to the product. “Efficient tracking the customer’s journey is a key requirement to optimize advertising campaigns and budgets” (Leeflang et al., 2014, 5).

As far as the future of MC content is concerned, the findings of the survey were the following:

- MC should deliver valuable, authentic, and consistent content to attract and retain their customer base. Authenticity is getting more and more important since customers can check the validity of every information easily.
- Besides being authentic the messages must be attractive emotionally as well. Emotions will play a central role also in the future marketing. As Bagozzi et al. (1999: 202) wrote, “Emotions are ubiquitous throughout marketing”.
- Consumers will have more role in generating the content.
- Environmental awareness will have more importance in the content
- Brand image related content would dominate MC.

Opinions about the classical tools mix of MC (advertising, PR, sales promotion, personal selling and direct marketing) in next decade according the survey are:

- Indians see a radical increase in all the five tools of the classic marketing communications mix.
- The other countries forecast a stagnation in advertising, a moderate increase in personal selling, and higher increase in PR, sales promotion and direct marketing.

The new tools of MC (guerrilla marketing, social media, mobile, online) will play an increasingly important role in the next decade according most of the respondents from all counties surveyed in the research.

The third effect of the changed business environment on MC can be identified in the different spending on MC tools as illustrated in Figure 5. The answers were measured with a scale of -5 to +5.

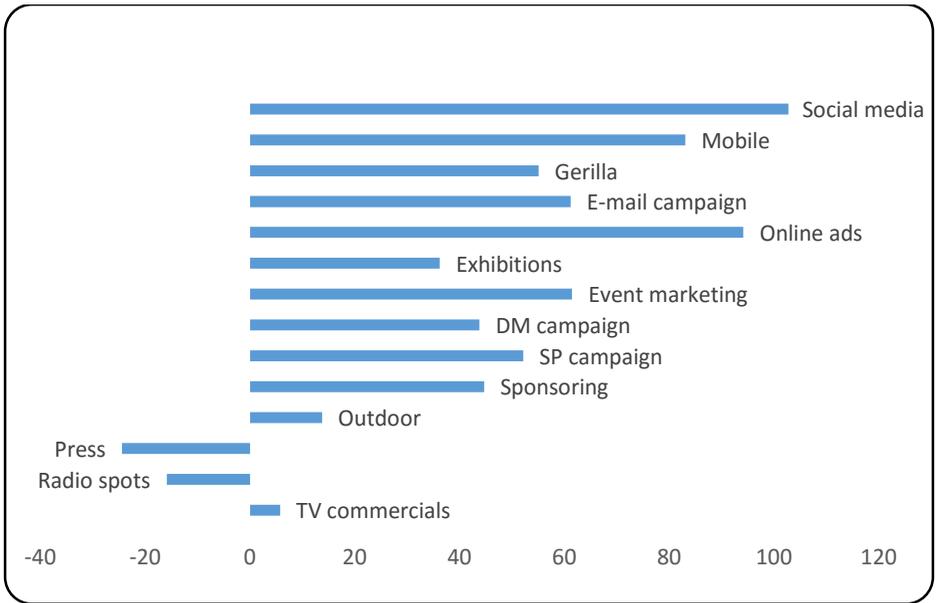


Figure 5. Spending on various MC tools in the next decade
Own research

The results are very much in line with the findings discussed in the previous part. Social media, online and mobile ads are in rise while spending on TV commercials, radio spots and printed advertisements will stagnate or even decrease.

6. CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH

After collecting processing and analyzing the data of the secondary and primary research the research model outlined earlier can be finalized (Figure 6).

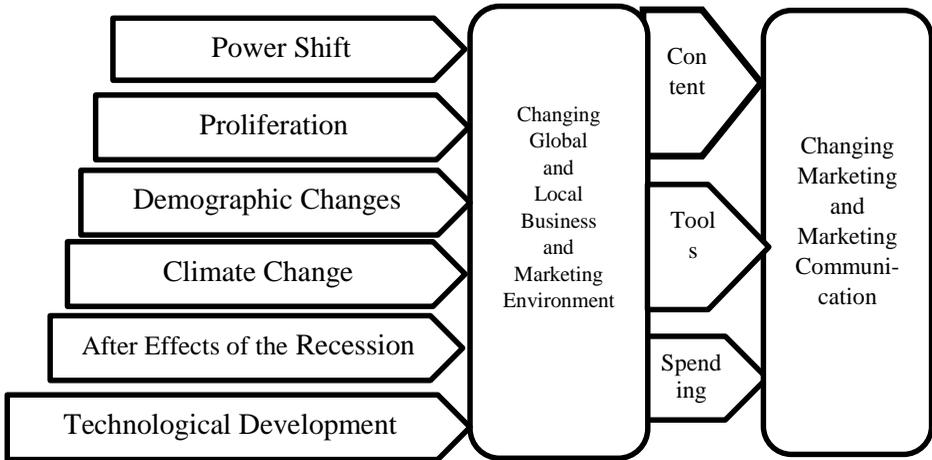


Figure 6. The completed research model (Own illustration)

Forecasts predict radical changes in the global world economy. The developing countries are likely to continue in the path of economic growth, which at the same time will result in a stronger competition for Western companies and in a large potential market to be explored. This change along with the megatrends discussed, especially the technological advances will fundamentally change the way marketing communication needs to be practiced in the next decade. Companies have to incorporate the new methods and tools of marketing communication into their business models to maintain or even grow their performance.

Changes are likely to effect the content, the tools and the money spent on different marketing means. Companies striving for survival and growth in this new multipolar world have to adapt their marketing activities to the local environments of the emerging countries. The difficulty of this from a managerial aspect is that these emerging countries present new challenges, especially in terms of cultural differences.

7. VERIFICATION OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

The verification of the assumptions of the dissertation is summarized below (Table 7).

Table 7. Verification of the assumptions (Own illustration)

	ASSUMPTIONS	DECISION	REASONS
Assumption 1.	Marketing communication will change radically all over the world.	Partly accepted	The majority of the Hungarian and Croatian respondents only predict small and/or gradual changes.
Assumption 2.	Changes in marketing communication will be greater on the emerging market than on the Western markets with greater expenditures and with new methods and contents.	Accepted	The Indian respondents clearly support this statement.
Assumption 3.	The endeavour for both globalization and localization will characterize marketing communication with more emphasis on localization in the emerging world.	Accepted	More than 70% of the Indian respondents agree about this issue.
Assumption 4.	The global megatrends will undoubtedly affect the business and marketing environment and thus reshape the practices of marketing communications.	Accepted	There is a clear agreement on this topic from all participating countries.
Assumption 5.	Each global trend will have a different effect on the practice of marketing communication.	Accepted	The assumption is accepted both in terms of each global trend having different effect on the practice of marketing communication, but also the effects will differ from country to country.

Assumption 6.	Mass communications' role will decrease.	Partly rejected	The assumption is true for the advanced part of the world, while in the emerging countries mass communication will still play an important role.
Assumption 7.	The rapid growth of digital technology will greatly change the choice of tools companies use for communicating with their customers.	Accepted	According to the research, an increase of expenditure is expected on social media and mobile media.
Assumption 8.	Tools that favour two-way communication will be gaining more popularity in marketing communication.	Accepted	The respondents from all three regions agree on this issue.
Assumption 9.	The content of marketing communication is going to favour messages that are more rational.	Rejected	According to the research, the role of emotions will play an important role, but at the same time, the rational communication will be replaced by messages that are more authentic.

8. THE NEW SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation offers quite a few newness. First, its international perspective and comprehensive nature offers newness; since majority of published researches reports about the development within one country or about the development of certain tools of marketing communication.

Regardless of its difficulties and limitations present study dared to undertake the risk to make surveys in different foreign countries including the exotic India; and to make international comparisons.

New scientific achievement is a new periodization of the modern marketing communication starting from mass communication to the 'digital' second decade of the twenty first century.

New achievement is the identification of those global megatrends, which will in smaller or larger extent influence the future of the world economy, the global business environment. It is also new that the research explored the regional differences in the opinions concerning the strength of the megatrends effects on the business environment.

The dissertation worked on the assumption that the development of marketing communication in the next decade will be influenced by these megatrends. The research proves this to be the case. Interestingly, we can find major differences among the responses. These can be traced back to economic and social reasons for the case of Hungary and Croatia. The optimism in terms of how these respondents felt was quite different in many areas from participants of the advanced countries and also from the Indian counterparts. Due to these reasons – which was also supported by secondary sources – we noticed that Indian participants voted for changes that are more radical and in general were much more optimistic about the possible changes in the next decade. The same cannot be said about the Hungarian and Croatian responses, where in many cases the optimism was not felt at all.

Another area of novelty in this research is the focus on how the trends influence the different areas of marketing communication. We concluded that global climate and demographic changes will be responsible for the changes in the content of marketing communication. The advance of technology and proliferation will influence the tools used and marketing communication expenditures will also change as a result, mostly influenced by proliferation and the shift in power change.

There are of course many limitations of the research. One of them is the size of the sample especially concerning the advanced countries. Since the research attempted to explore the future the probability of the results are hard to test. One unexpected natural or human phenomenon may totally change the way the future will go.

The study offers many possibilities for further research; the research may be extended in time, in its breadth and in its widths.

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